United Nations A/72/828–S/2018/314

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
18 April 2018

Original: English

General Assembly
Seventy-second session
Agenda item 99 (l)
General and complete disarmament: implementation of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction

Security Council
Seventy-third year

Letter dated 6 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

I have the honour to forward to you a statement by the official spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the "Novichok" chemical agent dated 4 April 2018 (see annex).*

I should be grateful if the present letter and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 99 (l), and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Vassily **Nebenzia**

* The annex is being circulated in the languages of submission only.

18-06213 (E) 200418

Please recycle

Annex to the letter dated 6 April 2018 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and the President of the Security Council

[Original: English and Russian]

Statement by the official spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation on the "Novichok" chemical agent

I would like to draw your attention to online material that has been on the internet for rather a long time but has failed to induce the UK media or the political establishment to start asking questions.

According to Wikileaks, the US and the UK have been actively suppressing international discussion on the now "popular" book on the "Novichok" nerve agent by Vil Mirzayanov, ever since its publication.

As it transpired, in April 2009, Hillary Clinton compiled drew up instructions for a DOS delegation due to attend an Australia Group meeting as a precaution against the eventuality of "Novichok" nerve agent and/or the Mirzayanov book being mentioned during the talks.

The instructions were not a chance occurrence. After Mirzayanov published his book, experts from a number of countries working on chemical weapons problems, including within the OPCW framework, asked the Americans some uncomfortable questions. So, the instructions included five points. It would be a good thing if a State Department spokesperson commented on this information at a briefing.

1. Avoid any substantive discussion of the Mirzayanov book "State secrets: An insider's chronicle of the Russian chemical weapons program" or so-called "Fourth Generation Agents."

2. Report any instances in which the book is raised.

3. Do not initiate or provoke conversations about the book or engage substantively if it comes up in conversation.

4. Express a lack of familiarity with the issue.

(Please remember that these are US State Department instructions for chemical experts, who know about the book and the problem itself and who are going to attend meetings of relevant panels.)

5. Quietly discourage substantive discussions by suggesting that the issue is "best left to experts in the capitals."

On March 28, 2009, not long before the instructions were written, Prague-based US diplomats reported by cable that they had informed their Czech colleagues at the Foreign Ministry that in future, it was undesirable to "publicly discuss next generation agents."

The Czech media have attacked us for constantly mentioning Prague in the context of the Skripal case. We are doing this for a reason, because there are a lot of questions. But Czech citizens should answer these questions, as I see it, for themselves rather than for us. They need to understand what games they have become involved in and are being forced to play. Do the citizens of the Czech Republic understand what is going on in their territory within the framework of NATO-

sponsored research? Do the country's officials and representatives of relevant services have access to research pursued by NATO members on their territory?

These materials are available online. All of this can and must lead to a serious national investigation.

Besides, as is shown by a March 26, 2009 US cable from The Hague, where, incidentally, the OPCW Headquarters is located (earlier this fact was known only to experts, but now, I think, even children know as much), "The UK Ministry of Defense has spoken to its counterparts in the Netherlands and Finland, apprised them of the conversation, and asked each country to provide guidance to its delegates not to raise this issue in future."

All of this is piecing together into a horrible jigsaw puzzle that shows the entire picture of what the world is being dragged into by the Western "grandees," London in this case, behind whose back Washington is looming large.

In the 1990s, intensive research into agents of this type was conducted by the Edgewood Chemical Biological Centre of the US Department of Defense. In 1998, the US National Institute of Standards and Technology, an organisation registering all newly synthesised organic compounds, added A-234 spectral characteristics to its database. But by 2000, the entry was deleted, seemingly for reasons of national security.

Nevertheless, the structural formula of "Novichok", which makes it possible for any high-tech chemical laboratory to resynthesise this nerve agent, was first published by Mr. Mirzayanov in his book.

It should be kept in mind that under Clause 1(a) of the Chemical Weapons Convention, each State Party undertakes never under any circumstances to develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile or retain chemical weapons, or transfer, directly or indirectly, chemical weapons to anyone.

Thus, the publication of the formula at the initiative of, or with the connivance of the then US administration can be seen as a transfer of knowledge about chemical weapons, that is, an indirect transfer of chemical weapons per se, and, accordingly, as a gross violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. No wonder that the Department of State recommended its staff to avoid the theme.

It is also notable that after the publication of Mirzayanov's "revelatory" book, the OPCW Scientific Advisory Board repeatedly considered the expediency of adding A-234 to the CWC Schedules of Chemicals but invariably came to the conclusion that there was no verifiable data on its existence and it was not feasible to classify it as a warfare agent. British and US scientists, among others, associated themselves with this approach, while drafting the "instructions" that they sent to their experts.

Washington and London reversed their stand only after the March 4 Salisbury incident. As we see it, this U-turn and their unexpected interoperability is just further evidence of the preplanned and provocative nature of these developments.